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Vilma: What I learned from the men in my life

■ Lifestyle
Dumaguete marks twin centenaries of a sisters' act



■ Business / B1
'Hot money' inflows up 29% in Oct.

■ Lifestyle
Colin Farrell: Her Majesty's Secret Service would not have me



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Wala nang krisis, ani GMA–Tamang desisyon e mali!

Ministry leaders seek understanding for Faye

By Blanche S. Rivera

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Fil-Am health care expert in 'America's Who's Who'

By Lindablue F. Romero

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Bush reaches out to GMA



EARLY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

'Let us keep our friendship strong'

Corruption story eyed in murder of photojournalist

GMA reinventing pattern of Cabinet recruitment with Angara

ANALYSIS



Cult leaders warn Gloria of upheaval

No joy for 2 hostages amid Muslim revelry



WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Place Garcia under civilian rule–Nene



₱20-M 'ghost delivery' case back to haunt ex-PNP execs

By Christian V. Esguerra

Drilon assures passage of 3 tax bills by yearend

RP proposal gets UN nod

By TJ Burgonio

FOREIGN affairs officials hailed last week the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of a Philippine proposal to promote an interfaith dialogue among countries as a means to resolve international conflicts.

The resolution, principally authored by the Philippines and cosponsored by 24 other countries, was adopted by consensus when it was formally proposed before the General Assembly on Thursday (Friday local time).

Interfaith dialogue as a means of promoting global tolerance and understanding has been identified as a Philippine initiative since Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. proposed it more than two years ago, the officials said.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, who received the "good news" from Ambassador Lauro Baja, called the unanimous approval of the Philippine initiative "a major moral and diplomatic victory for the Philippines."

"It took a country like the Philippines, where majority of Christians and Muslims live together in harmony and yet continue to pursue permanent peace, to remind the United Nations that religion plays a key role in preventing conflicts," he said.

The initiative was first presented by Filipino diplomats before the General Assembly last year. Speaking before the Asia-Europe Meeting in Hanoi last month, President Macapagal-Arroyo herself discussed the need for inter-religious dialogues.

Baja, Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN, for his part, said the resolution was a landmark in UN history "as it opens the door of the United Nations to partnership" with civil society and the religious sector.

He said the General Assembly affirmed in the resolution that mutual understanding and inter-religious dialogue "constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace."

The resolution also took note of the work of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on inter-religious dialogue and encouraged relevant bodies of the UN to work closely with the organization, he said.

"We are gratified that the resolution has received broad support from all major religions of the world and from all geographic regions as gleaned from the list of co-sponsors," Baja said.



FEEL THE MESSAGE. De La Salle University student Miguel Pascual shows off an invention by his school group that allows cellphone SMS or text messages to be converted to braille form to allow the message to be "read" by the blind. The La Salle students came up with the device as part of a thesis project.

Abadilla 5 wife airs plea to SC

THE WIFE of one of the Abadilla 5 has appealed to Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. to hasten the review of the convicts' appeal to have their death sentences overturned.

Marlina Lumanog, wife of Lenido Lumanog, said Davide had promised in February to resolve the convicts' appeal "within six months" after their appellants' briefs were filed.

"But the briefs have been filed. [illegible] co-accused were adopted. We failed to meet time. The documents are complete but, up to now, nothing has happened to our appeal," she said.

Lumanog said she feared the appeal process would take years after the high tribunal ruled in July that death penalty cases should be reviewed first by the Court of Appeals before the high court acts on them.

"We've been waiting for more than eight years to get justice. Now we might have to wait longer..." she said.

Philip C. Tubeza

Fil-Am health care ...



Cult leaders warn Gloria of upheaval

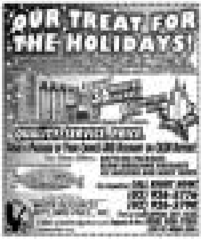
Youths burgle train waiting to take survivors to Manila

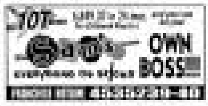
Bloodied legs, cigarette pack haunt son's dreams of ma

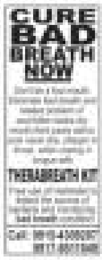
Sleeping in last coach

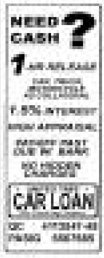
Superstitious belief

Fil-Am's death in Iraq shatters Angeles family's hopes

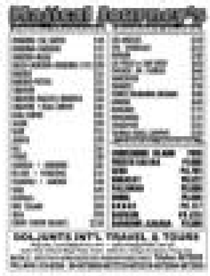




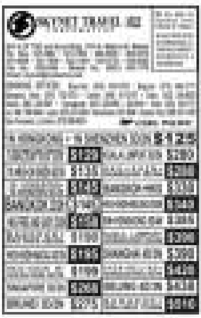










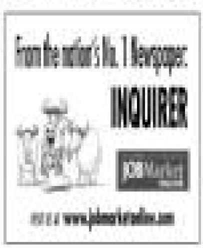



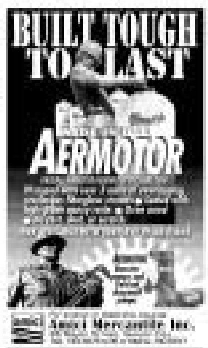












25-centavo Church fund grows to ₱5M

By Blanche S. Rivera

FROM a tiny seed a giant tree grows. From 25 centavos a fund now topping P5 million has been collected.

The Archdiocese of Manila's Pondo ng Pinoy, a development program counting on donations of as little as 25 centavos to support anti-poverty initiatives of non-government organizations, now has P5 million in its coffers.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales said the PnP was able to raise the amount only five months after it was launched by the archdiocese last June.

He said he expected donations to pour in this Christmas season because people are more generous at this time.

"There are many who understand that helping others is possible even if you have little. Even the children give their 25 cents," Rosales told reporters in an interview Saturday.

He said the PnP was a way of helping those who were not being helped by the government.

"We will help the people find what they are looking for. We will teach them that what little we all have when put together will go a long way," Rosales said.

The PnP, which was inspired by the Pondong Batangan that Rosales successfully established in Batangas when he was archbishop of Lipa, was launched on June 11.

Born of the biblical story of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, the PnP urges people to donate as little as 25 centavos to their parishes, which in turn will remit the collections to the archdiocese of Manila.

NPA captive's child begs Reds for info

By Christian V. Esguerra

A DAUGHTER of the military intelligence officer who has been held captive by the New People's Army for more than three years is not about to give up trying to get him back.

Rosemarie Rosete, daughter of Army Sgt. Jeremias Rosete, has written to no less than Luis Jalandoni, imploring the chair of the National Democratic Front to free her father.

"Three years, I think, is already enough," she said in the letter dated Oct. 30. "We did negotiations before but with no good result."

At the very least, Rosemarie asked Jalandoni to verify if her father had changed loyalties from the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the communist movement, as claimed by the AFP in explaining its difficulty in rescuing Rosete.

"The AFP said that my father has already joined your group but we don't believe this report," she said.

"That is why I am asking for your help to give us information about him. We need to know his condition."

Rosemarie reminded Jalandoni that Silvestre Bello III, chief government negotiator in the peace process with the NDF, had said that the government was willing to work on Rosete's release.

The effort rests on whether the military spy was "still with the government" or had joined the Valentin Palomine Command, the NPA unit that seized him and three civilian agents on Sept. 4, 2001.

"We need a letter, picture or videos of my father as well as the other captives proving that they are still alive," Rosemarie said.

In a previous interview with the INQUIRER, Bello said the government could not make a move until the NDF clarified the status of Rosete.

Storm enters country

TWO DAYS after weather experts announced that the country had begun experiencing a mild El Niño, tropical depression "Unding" entered the Philippines promising to deliver much-needed rains for parched areas in Eastern Visayas and Bicol.

Weather satellite photos released by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) showed Unding yesterday still out over the Pacific Ocean but heading for Bicol.

Pagasa's three-day forecast indicated Unding may not hit land until Thursday.

As of yesterday afternoon, the storm's center was estimated at 940 km east southeast of Guiuan, Eastern Samar. *Volt Contreras*

Ministry leaders seek understanding for Faye

'In good faith'

Rather's case

Nothing political

The Daily Gospel

Supreme Court Doctrines

METRO



PNP sets holiday watch

Cops in Santa outfits to be deployed in malls

By Tarra V. Quismundo

[illegible]

New task force formed to keep LRT, MRT safe

By Luige A. del Puerto and Tarra V. Quismundo

[illegible]

Residents protest QC road project to save old trees

By Nancy C. Carvajal

[illegible]

The WORLD

Editor Lorraine B. Gamo



US troops 'occupy' Falluja



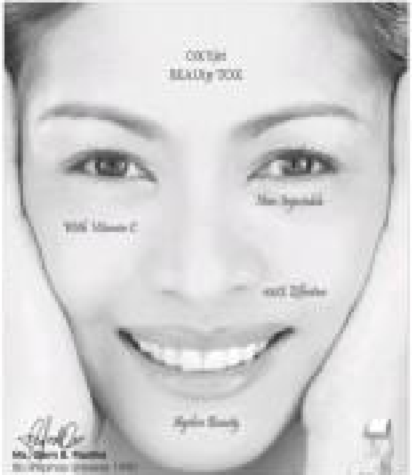




Iraq gears up for 1st elections in decades

Ex-security chief Dahlan seen to replace Arafat

World powers set to revive moribund Mideast peace plan



Ivory Coast faces serious humanitarian crisis–UN



A FAMILY arrives from Abidjan at Charles de Gaulle airport, north of Paris, Nov. 13 after fleeing from Ivory Coast.

Egypt hopes to solve riddle of King Tut's death

Nasa aims to bust new speed barriers in test flight



FESTIVAL FLIGHT

Blasts rock southern Thailand

WorldBriefs

Powell to meet PLO leaders

S. Korea urges atomic talks

Atomic inspectors in Iran

Cheney hospitalized

Arson attacks to continue

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION



Favorable Islam

EDITORIAL

THE MUSLIM community celebrated the end of the holy month of Ramadan on Saturday; today's official holiday is an opportunity for the rest of the nation to mark Eid'l Fitr, as the concluding feast is known.

[illegible]

Arafat and how the Mideast conflict started

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

[illegible]

Pleasing everyone

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

[illegible]

An idea badly needed for our time

POLITICAL TIDBITS



Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

Unattended complaints

READERS' ADVOCATE



Raul J. Palabrica

Whose moral values?

COMMENTARY

Denis Murphy

Amassing wealth while others go hungry is morally sinful

Officer corps issues

THE LONG VIEW



Manuel L. Quezon III

THEY SAID

Muckraking

New OWWA Charter needed

LETTERS

Let's not preempt the courts

Laying off casuals a dangerous move

The environment above all

Across the NATION

Luzon farmers hit water diversion plan

Court employee sues judge for sexual harassment

DAVAO CITY—A court stenographer here sued her former boss for alleged sexual harassment.

Charged before the City Prosecutor's Office here on Tuesday last week was a judge of the Regional Trial Court.

The judge declined to comment on the charges when contacted by the Inquirer.

The nongovernment organization [illegible] is assisting the stenographer, who is now assigned with another sala.

In her complaint, the stenographer said the judge started his sexual advances when she celebrated her birthday on Aug. 25, 2002.

She was washing dishes inside the court's comfort room when her boss allegedly came in and asked if he could kiss her.

She said she refused but the judge still kissed her and then persuaded her to accept a P500 bill as birthday present. She said she declined the offer but the judge was insistent.

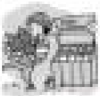
The stenographer said she eventually accepted the money so as not to offend her boss. She said she could not afford to lose her job.

After that, the stenographer and her boss would always [illegible]. She said she tried to endure the harassment because of fear that the judge could always have her fired.

Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

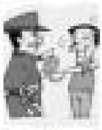
ROUNDUP

Baguio trade fair



Youth exec slain

Ex-cop nabbed for shabu



5 cops slain in Davao, Zambales attacks

Outpost attack

Zambales attack

Suspect in shabu case turns state witness

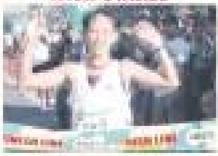
Rangers fielded on Apo Island to watch divers

TB prevalent among prisoners—DILG

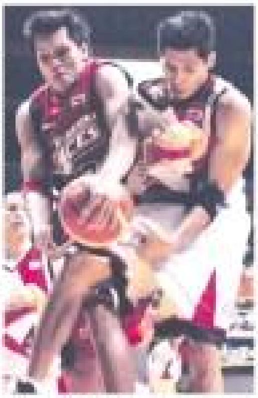


Cablay shines as Aces turn back Beermen

WHAT'S INSIDE



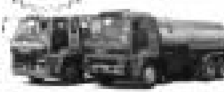










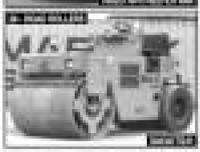
















Serious gym work starts for Pacquiao

Vence clinches record 6th Milo marathon title



Montaña has a jewel in stocky Salvador

A disease called slowdown stalks the PBA

Bare Eye



Bush reaches out to GMA



SULU SOUVENIR: US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone (left) receives a "kris" from Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong (center) and ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin during a visit to Jolo.

Corruption story eyed in murder



Angaliba' reply

Journalist threatened

Reward

Bodyguard not around

No joy for 2 hostages amid Muslim revelry

No release of prisoners

Contacts continue, says DFA

GMA reinventing pattern of Cabinet recruitment with Angara

Why Angara?

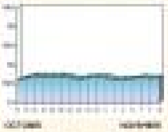
Reinventing Cabinet

BUSINESS

‘Hot money’ inflows up 29% in Oct.

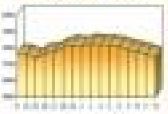


Currencies



Stock Market

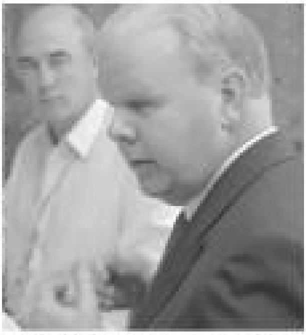
PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



Sluggish trading week seen

HSBC to earmark funds for micro financing in RP

By Doris C. Dumlao



SMITH discusses business prospects in Asia Pacific while HSBC Philippines CEO Warner Manning looks on.

Why bad policies prevail



No Free Lunch

Cielito F. Habito

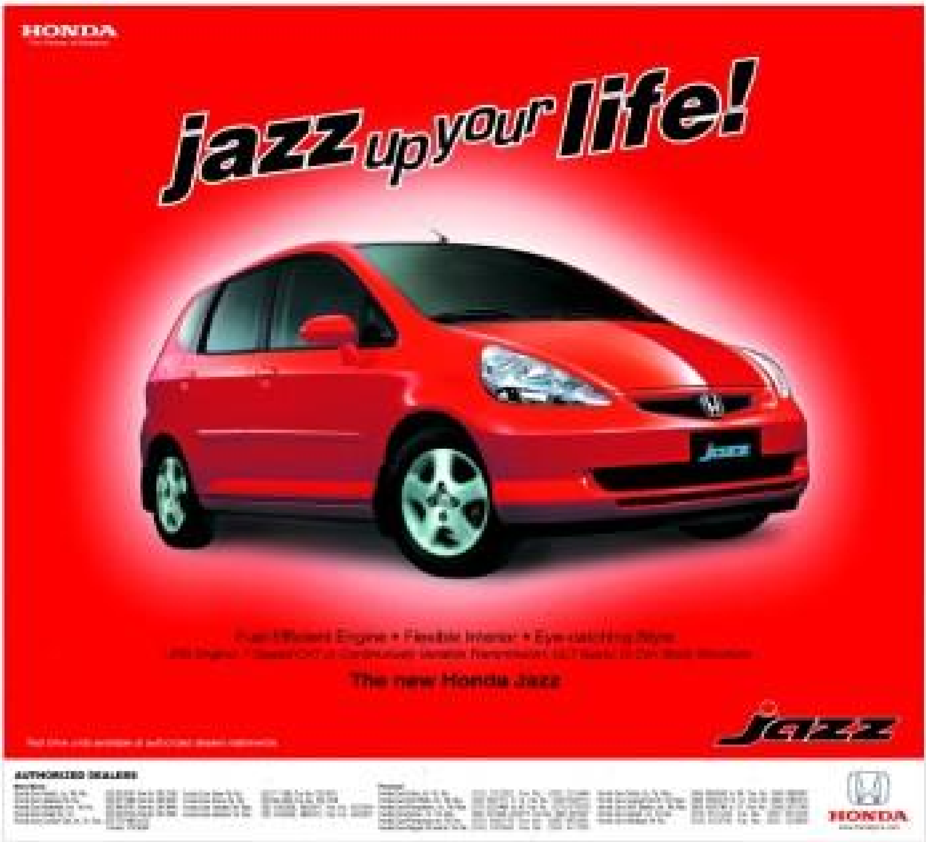
Tyranny of the minority

Life is unfair

P1-billion lobby!

JG Summit reports net gains of ₱1.8B





9-mo public sector deficit jumps 25%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUDGET shortfall of the public sector swelled by 25 percent in the first three quarters of the year to P167.31 billion.

This was largely due to the ballooning deficit of distressed government-owned and –controlled corporations or GOCCs.

In the same period last year, the country's consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) was placed at P133.37 billion.

CPSD is the combined budget deficits of the national government, state-owned companies and local government units. City and municipal governments, however, have been posting surpluses.

The latest deficit figure of P167.31 billion, although higher than year-ago level, was well within the government's projection of P202.52 billion.

Government data show the 9-month CPSD breakdown as follows: P141.91 billion accounted or by the national government; P57.88 billion, monitored GOCCs, and P13.16 billion, cost of the old central bank's restructuring.

These deficits were slightly compensated by the P7.26 billion in gains from adjustments in the net lending to and equity in GOCCs, and from privatization efforts. The public sector also gained from the P38.6 billion in surpluses posted by the LGUs, government financial institutions, and pension funds Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System.

While the national government, trying to exercise fiscal discipline, had improved on its budget position, the GOCCs had a financial performance that left much to be desired. The P141.91 billion in deficit posted by the national government in the first three quarter of this year was a little lower than the P142.7 billion last year. The P57.88 billion budget shortfall registered by the GOCCs was more than double the P22.06 billion they posted last year.

The biggest losers among the GOCCs monitored by the Department of Finance during the period were the National Power Corp., the National Food Authority and the Light Rail Transit Authority.

The government attributed the heavy losses of state-owned firms to several factors, including inefficiencies in collection, insufficient corporate funds for operations, maintenance of losing subsidiaries, and charters that lacked flexibility in raising revenues.

The fiscal burden caused by state-owned firms was the reason the national government was planning to institute reforms that would address problems concerning their management.

The DOF has tapped a consultant to work on establishing a scorecard system for GOCCs. Under the system, state-owned companies would be assigned working targets, and they would be rewarded or penalized based on their performance as against these targets.

The DOF has also called for the removal of provisions in the GOCC charters that required the national government to automatically guarantee their loans in case of default.

The Senate has also called for an inquiry on the management of losing GOCCs, including the handling of their finances.

Sulu now open for business

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian



I WAS impressed with the list of guests and names that I saw—business people, government leaders, diplomats and heads of donor agencies. All of them trooped to Patikul, Sulu, last Oct.12 -13 for the 3rd Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Business Congress. It was certainly inspiring to see the once troubled province attract so many movers and shakers who pledged their support to help Muslim Mindanao achieve its full potential as an investment haven.

Much of Sulu's new vigor can be attributed to its businessman-governor and my good friend, Ben Loong, who owns one of the province' most successful enterprises, the BJ Coco Mill, which may soon become a "special economic zone." Sulu, is now sending signals to the world, that it is now ready for business and investments.

Echoing other local leaders, Gov. Loong stressed that the pockets of violence in Sulu is more often blown out of proportion by mass media. ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin, a Sulu native, said the conduct of the congress and the number of foreign guests proved that Sulu and the rest of the ARMM can be a viable business destination. Last year, ARMM posted a crime rate of only 2.8 percent per 100,000 people—the lowest across the country.

Sec. Jess Dureza, chair of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco), urged the private sector to help reduce barriers to investments like the high systems loss and low revenue collection among the region's electric cooperatives. We all know that dependable power supply will always be a major concern of business

An inspiring moment was when John Perrine, a long time Mindanao resident, and chair of Chiquitta/ Unifrutti Philippines, exporter of Mindanao banana and pineapple to many parts of the world, "spoke from the heart" about his "leap of faith" in 1996 when he chose to invest in Datu Paglas, Maguindanao. Perrine said he had never intended to invest in Muslim Mindanao because of perceived risks but his meeting with Mayor Ibrahim "Toto" Paglas changed his mind. In the end, says Perrine, it's not about money, markets or technology, it's about trusting people and "having a personal relationship."

John Dalton, program manager of USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program, which has on-going livelihood, business support, infrastructure building, export promotion, education and governance improvement activities in the ARMM since 1995, emphasized the need to improve the region's educational system to cope with the growing demands of business. ARMM may soon run out of employable people if the educational system doesn't improve. He pointed out that the region's local governments spend far too little of their share of property taxes on education. There is a critical need for greater investment in education and developing human resource.

Haroun Bandila, chair of the ARMM Business Council (ABC), which spearheaded the business congress, presented the council's resolutions urging President Arroyo to appoint a representative of the ABC to the forthcoming GRP-MILF peace talks. They also called for the re-establishment of Islamic banking, improvement of power supply and telecommunication system in the ARMM, upgrading of seaports and reduction of inter-island shipping rates, and reforms in education. They committed to provide technical training in food processing and product packaging for small businesses.

We now see a more empowered private sector that is ready to do its role in creating small ripples of change that may soon result in an environment where businesses, big or small, will thrive. Where families, mothers and children can live peacefully in their homes.

Clearly, things are beginning to hum in Muslim Mindanao and this time it's business that is sounding the clarion call.

As we celebrate EID-UL-FITR today, which is the Muslim Holiday breaking the fast of the Blessed Month of Ramadan, we pray that Mindanao and the rest of the country be showered with the blessings of Allah today and always. *Eid l Fitr al Mubarak !*

(Joji Ilagan Bian is a strong advocate for Mindanao's development ; she is Member of the Export Development Council and former Chair of the Mindanao Business Council ; Vice Chair ,Mindanao Commission Of Women and National Corn Board; Chair of the Mindanao TVET Association. Email comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

'Hot money' inflow up 29% in Oct.

From page B1

functions by 2 percentage points.

Despite the government's fragile fiscal position, robust private consumption fueled by election spending and higher usage of cellular phones also allowed the economy to grow by 6.2 percent in the second quarter from a year ago.

This brought the first-semester annual gross domestic product growth to 6.3 percent compared to only 4.5 percent in the same period last year. The government is targeting a 4.9-5.8-percent GDP growth this year.

Multilateral institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund, have upgraded their growth outlook for the country this year.

Although the US Federal Reserve Open Market Committee (FOMC) had raised key interest rates four times so far this year to 2 percent, the BSP is confident the US and local rates differential remains "comfortable."

In the meantime, American Express Bank expects the US Fed to raise rates again at its December meeting, though "it is probably a closer call than the markets have currently factored in."

"The Fed made only minor changes to the FOMC statement that accompanied Wednesday's 25-basis point hike in rates, sounding more upbeat on the growth outlook but still expecting inflation to stay low," Amex said in its weekly report.

It said the Fed tightening should continue in 2005, taking the Fed funds rate to 3.5 percent by yearend.

"In US, data point to the economy continuing to perform reasonably well in 2005, despite less monetary and tax support. Jobs creation is improving and consumer confidence is up, helping to underpin retail sales. Spending should stay supported in 2005, helped also by falling oil prices and rising house prices," Amex said.

For its part, the BSP said that domestic monetary tightening might be inevitable if US Fed rates hit 4 percent next year.

Malaysia, Indonesia block RP move to extend safeguard duties

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENTS of Indonesia and Malaysia are opposing proposals for the Philippines to extend the safeguard duty on ceramic tiles imported from their countries.

According to a Tariff Commission (TC) report issued last month, Indonesia and Malaysia said they would ask for compensation if the Philippine extension were to push through.

A similar situation occurred sometime before between the Philippines and Singapore. The country is now compensating Singapore for not lowering tariffs on petrochemical products, as agreed under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' free trade pact.

Violation

The Tariff Commission has recommended to the Department of Trade and Industry that the safeguard duty on imported ceramic tiles be extended for three more years as the local industry still needed protection.

Citing a position paper from Indonesia's DTI dated Aug. 16, the tariff body said Jakarta believes that an extension would violate provisions of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Safeguards.

The agreement provides that an extension of safeguards may be allowed only if it continues to be necessary to prevent serious injury to a local industry.

Serious injury

Southeast Asia's largest country also insisted that the WTO agreement required evidence of serious injury or threat to Philippine ceramic firms.

Aside from this, Indonesia said local ceramic firms have been complaining that sales of local ceramic tiles could not cover the cost of doing business, which meant that the issue of safeguard was irrelevant.

Last month, the TC said the local industry has made serious efforts and was making progress in its compliance to a plan meant to adjust their businesses and prepare for a liberalized market.

Safeguard duty

Applied to agricultural and non-agricultural products, a safeguard duty is an additional duty imposed on imported articles in case there is a finding that substantial importation has directly caused injury to the domestic industry.

Similar to dumping and countervailing measures, a safeguard duty is one of the trade protection measures available under the WTO.

Effective Jan. 9, 2002, the safeguard measure on ceramic tiles provides an additional duty of P8.90 a kilogram. This was reduced to P8.20 a kilo the following year up to Jan. 10, 2004, and P7.50 a kilo up to Jan. 10, 2005.

RFM marks turnaround in 1st 9 mos

Makro to open P250-M store in Cubao

JG Summit reports net gains...



Sluggish trading week seen

Local toothpaste maker plans regional expansion

By Ronnel W. Domingo



PEDRO

Solons against tax plan are antipoor

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES



Honesto C. General

Bayantel sees P6B in sales

BUSINESS

Bank lending hit ₱1.49T in September

By Doris C. Dumlao

Renewable energy can save RP $2.3B

By Abigail L. Ho

BCDA reviews deal with Baguio officials



NOTICE OF SALE

Pancake House all set for Asia expansion

REVENUE ENHANCEMENT MEASURE

BIR adopts new auditing system



Abac urges firmer Apec trade commitments

Bayantel to settle additional ₱150M in loan interests

BSP finds finance sector performance disturbing

LIFESTYLE

The boys from Vienna sang, sneezed, yawned, and conquered



In the high register, the voices soared effortlessly with astounding evenness

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor



THE UPCC complements folk and artistic songs from different parts of the Philippines with choreographed movements.



EXCERPTS from "Misa" by Agripino Diestro are presented during the Milan stint of the University of the Philippines Concert Chorus.

Christmas comes early to Filipinos in Milan

The recent visit of the UP Concert Chorus had Pinoys in the Italian commercial/business center feeling nostalgic for home and the past

Text and photos by Linda B. Bolido

[illegible]

Abbreviated tour

[illegible]

Rousing start

[illegible]



ARTISTIC director/conductor Janet Sabas-Aracama and Philippine Consul General Romeo Manalo joyfully congratulate each other for a successful show.



THE ORNATE altar of the high-collegial and site also Basilica di San Lorenzo is a perfect backdrop for the a cappella concert.



THIS image from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" captures the levity of the opera based on the original play by French playwright Beaumarchais, and libretto by Italian Lorenzo da Ponte. It is a masterpiece of musical beauty which mixes comedy and intrigue in a brilliantly satirical story about the quirks of lovers and the presumptions of class.

Mandarin stages songs from Mozart's 'Figaro'

[illegible]









The sublime but unheralded talents of Filipino theater artists are on full display at the ongoing National Theater Festival at the CCP

Penniless, but proud and gifted





Penniless, but proud and gifted

Inexhaustible resource

Heartbreaking display

Saving grace

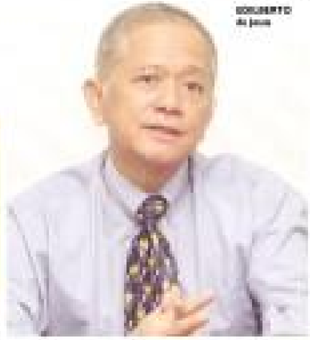
Taking a cue



EDUCATION REVOLUTION

DepEd honors partners





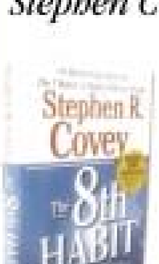
By [illegible]
Contributor

[illegible]

Rigodon highlights reunion of UST Philets, Liberal Arts and Artlets

[illegible]

Stephen Covey's latest



[illegible]

The marquees are alive on West End

By Lori C. Soberio
Contributor

WEST End, London's theater row when compared by our very own Lea Salonga who originated the role of Kim in "Miss Saigon" more than a decade ago, is steadily vibrant and thriving.

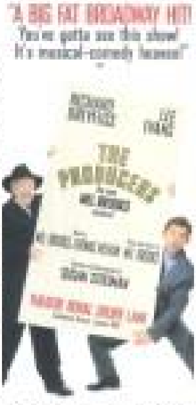
Lately, West End productions have become star-studding as Hollywood hotshots light up the marquees of the famous venues in this theater circuit.

Leading the roster is Christian Slater, who ignited the big screen with his performances in such films as "Untamed Heart," "Broken Arrow" and "Interview with the Vampire." Last September, Slater headed over to the West End stage to take on the role made famous by Jack Nicholson in Milos Forman's Oscar-winning film, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

Although he does not attempt to eclipse Nicholson's Oscar award-winning screen performance, the 35-year-old Slater breathes life into the anti-hero character of Randle Patrick McMurphy in the play which returns to the London stage after 30 years.

Slater makes his West End debut at the Gielgud Theater, where he shares the stage with Mackenzie Crook (as Billy Bibbit), the popular Gareth in BBC's "The Office." Frances Barber plays the nasty Nurse Ratched.

Slater, however, [illegible] out of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (play by Dale Wasserman, based on the novel by Ken Kesey). He started in the play last September and was supposed to perform only until December. But he currently extended his run to early January 2005.



RICHARD Dreyfuss was supposed to star in the London production of "The Producers," but bowed out a week before opening night.



SLATER with fellow inmates, including Mackenzie Crook as Billy Bibbit (center right).

Lane in London

Nathan Lane brings the popular Broadway version of Mel Brooks' 1968 film classic, "The Producers," to the London stage. In a role he also originated, Lane replaces the [illegible] producer Max Bialystock at the posh Theater Royal Drury Lane, where "Miss Saigon" had [illegible] more than a decade.

Lane won a Tony award in 2001 for his role in "The Producers," which chronicles the adventures of a pair of hapless impresarios who attempt to stage the worst musical ever, based on the life of Hitler.

Oscar-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss ("The Goodbye Girl") was supposed to topbill the West End version of "The Producers," which opened last Oct. 22. However, Dreyfuss dropped out from the production a week before the opening night as he was reported to be having trouble from his surgery for abscessed disc and the reoccurrence of a shoulder injury.

Australian actor Jason Donovan returns to the West End with Ian Fleming's eye-popping musical, "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," where he gets to play a flying car. Based on Ken Hughes' 1968 film, "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" boasts of hummy, memorable music by the Sherman Brothers.

Donovan, [illegible] has been earning raves for his performance as the eccentric inventor Caractacus Potts, at the Palladium Theater.

The venue is nothing new to him. It was at the Palladium where Donovan also made his West End debut as the lead in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." Donovan does eight performances a week in "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" until the musical closes in March 2005. Sharing stellar billing with him in the production is [illegible] Stephen Gately, who plays the Child Catcher.

New challenge

Dashing British hunk Dougray Scott, who [illegible] Hollywood attention as the gorgeous leading man in "Ever After" opposite Drew Barrymore and Tom Cruise's arch-nemesis in "Mission Impossible 2," faces a new challenge with the London revival of "Becket."

The West End production of Jean Anouilh's play is based on the 1964 film, with Richard Burton as Becket and Peter O'Toole as Henry II, who both earned Oscar best actor citations for their respective roles.

Scott plays the title role in "Becket" as a medieval playboy turned troublesome archbishop. The celebrated play returns to the London stage after 13 years and also marks Scott's West End homecoming. He was last seen onstage in Sam Mendes' production of the World War I drama, "To the Green Fields Beyond," in 2000.

Scott brings to "Becket" his [illegible] acting prowess, honed in the professional drama schools of London. The play is being shown at the Theater Royal Haymarket.

Other hot tickets on West End are "Fame: The Musical" at Aldwych, "Jerry Springer—The Opera" at Cambridge, "Lion King" at Lyceum, "Mamma Mia!" at Prince of Wales, "Saturday Night Fever" at Apollo Victoria, "Journey's End" at New Ambassadors, "Mary Poppins" at Prince Edward Theater and the long-running "Les Miserables" at Queen's and "Phantom of the Opera" at Her Majesty's.

Recent titles

There are three recent titles in the West End musical lineup. "The Woman in White" is Charlotte Jones' adaptation of the thrilling Victorian novel by Wilkie Collins. Maria Friedman leads the cast, with Michael Crawford, the original actor in "Phantom of the Opera." The music is by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Interestingly, Lloyd Webber's "Phantom," which marked its 18th year last October, continues to run at Her Majesty's Theater. The movie version opens in the United States next month.

"Buried Child," Sam Shepard's dark, Pulitzer-winning comedy about a dysfunctional midwestern family, stars Lauren Ambrose of "Six Feet Under" fame. She shares stellar billing with M. Emmet Walsh and Broadway



CHRISTIAN Slater in the stage version of "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest"



DOUGRAY Scott plays Becket in Jean Anouilh's play



RANDLE Patrick McMurphy (Slater) takes on his adversary, Nurse Ratched (Frances Barber), in "Cuckoo's Nest."